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## PHUBBING PHENOMENON: CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MARKETING

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The modern digital world, along with many opportunities, raises a significant number of challenges. One of them is the emergence of the phubbing phenomenon as a manifestation of users' dependence on smartphones and constant distractions on social networks. In this regard, the problem of forming ethical behavior while social interaction in both the digital world and live communication arises.

The article has investigated the peculiarities of the phubbing phenomenon and its influence on social interactions in terms of strengthening the social responsibility of marketing activities on the part of smartphone industry companies. The emergence of the phubbing phenomenon and the term for its designation has been examined. It has been demonstrated that the problems of ethical behavior during live communication have become more relevant due to the growth of the number of mobile phone users.

Definitions of phubbing, generated by modern means of Artificial Intelligence, i.e. Midjourney Neural Network and ChatGPT, as well as connections between the phubbing phenomenon and marketing have been given. The main types of phubbing and the terminological apparatus of phubbing, which are highlighted in scientific papers for the time being, have been summarized. The use of Google Digital Tools, i.e. Google Trends, has enabled analyzing the popularity of the term „phubbing” in the world and in Ukraine. A survey of students of Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University (Ukraine) was conducted in order to determine the attitude of Generation Z towards the behavior related to phubbing. Examples of drawing attention to the problem of phubbing have been given. It has been demonstrated that the active position of smartphone industry companies regarding the formation of ethical behavior in a hybrid environment is relevant for a number of reasons. Development and implementation of company policy regarding social responsibility can be done through marketing activity of smartphone industry companies.

**Keywords:** *phubbing, smartphone, social interaction, live communication, ethical behavior, social responsibility, marketing.*

### FENOMENUL PHUBBING: DISCURSUL CONTEMPORAN ÎN LUMEA DIGITALĂ ȘI RESPONSABILITATEA SOCIALĂ A MARKETINGULUI

Lumea digitală contemporană, cu multitudinea sa de oportunități, aduce în același timp numeroase provocări. Printre acestea se numără și emergența fenomenului de „phubbing”, o manifestare a dependenței de smartphone-uri și a distragerii atenției prin rețelele sociale. Această situație pune în lumină necesitatea adoptării unui comportament etic, atât în mediul digital, cât și în interacțiunile față în față.

Articolul de față explorează specificitățile phubbing-ului și impactul său asupra interacțiunilor sociale, subliniind importanța responsabilității sociale în activitățile de marketing ale companiilor din industria telefoniei mobile. A fost analizată emergența phubbing-ului și etimologia termenului. S-a constatat că problemele comportamentului etic în timpul comunicării directe sunt tot mai relevante odată cu creșterea numărului utilizatorilor de smartphone-uri.

Articolul prezintă definiții ale phubbing-ului formulate de sisteme moderne de inteligență artificială, inclusiv Midjourney Neural Network și ChatGPT, evidențiind legăturile dintre phubbing și marketing. De asemenea, sunt sintetizate principalele forme ale phubbing-ului și terminologia specifică, așa cum sunt ele reflectate în literatura de specialitate până în prezent. Exploatarea instrumentelor digitale oferite de Google, precum Google Trends, a facilitat analiza gradului de popularitate a termenului „phubbing” atât la nivel global, cât și în Ucraina. Un sondaj efectuat printre studenții Universității Politehnice de Stat din Zhytomyr, Ucraina, a avut ca scop identificarea percepțiilor generației Z legate de fenomenul phubbing. Studiul a inclus exemple concludente care arată interesul crescut față de problema phubbing-ului. Rezultatele au evidențiat importanța unei abordări active din partea companiilor din industria smartphone-urilor în promovarea unui comportament etic într-un mediu hibrid, digital și real. S-a subliniat că elaborarea și implementarea unei

politici de responsabilitate socială prin intermediul strategiilor de marketing ale companiilor din acest sector reprezintă un pas esențial în conștientizarea și combaterea efectelor negative ale phubbing-ului.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *phubbing, smartphone, interacțiune socială, comunicare live, comportament etic, responsabilitate socială, marketing*

### **Introduction**

At the present time, the interpretation of socially responsible marketing is quite broad – from responsibility to consumers and society and ensuring social welfare to covering the concept of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (Horokhova, 2021). The increasing integration of marketing and its tools into social life and digital transformations of various spheres of human life lead, among other things, to the complication and emergence of new forms of interaction between the organization and consumers and to raise issues regarding the ethical behavior of organizations, compliance with which is partly a company's voluntary choice and does not involve clear criteria. One of the aspects of the aforementioned issues is the consideration of the companies' role in forming the ethical foundations of social interaction, in particular, smartphone industry companies as those that create a physical basis for interaction in a digital environment.

The peculiarities of modern digital culture are formed due to the features inherent in the digital environment, i.e. the availability of large arrays of information, prompt data updates, enabling real-time communications without being tied to the location of participants, activation of the processes of acquiring digital skills by users both for work and for non-work time, etc. Simultaneously, digital transformations also create new challenges related to various types of user addictions to the Internet, smartphones, and social networks, which gravely affect not only the psychological state of users and their relationships but also cause risks to physical health, for instance, related to the consumption of digital content „on the go”. Not so obvious, but causing no less concern, there raises the phubbing phenomenon as the phenomenon of distracting a person to their smartphone during live communication. Accordingly, the study of the reasons for such unethical behavior, as well as the possibilities of influencing it on the part of smartphone industry companies, becomes relevant.

Research on the phubbing phenomenon is also important, taking into account the comprehensive direction of the digital transformation of European society and economy (Business.Diia, 2022). Among others, it declares the achievement of overall public benefit, which involves consideration of social and ethical aspects.

### **Literature Review**

The indisputable advantage of smartphones is the ability for users to communicate with other people almost anywhere at any time, which has led to the emergence of certain ambiguous patterns of user behavior in everyday life. In particular, there is growing concern that smartphones can sometimes detract, rather than enhance, social interactions (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). Smartphone use has changed patterns of online and offline interaction (Mantere, et al., 2021). Being distracted by the phone can pose risks in terms of the user's own safety. V. Du, K. Hing, and H. Gong actualize the issue of awareness of the user's distraction on the smartphone while walking, which poses a serious problem for the safety of the person themselves (Du, et al., 2017).

The all-purpose availability and constantly expanding capabilities of the smartphone have led to the emergence of certain paradoxes of live communications, in particular, the „present-absence” paradox („alone together”) and the «freeing-enslaving» paradox. Both of these paradoxes address how we communicate and relate with others. In the present-absent paradox, we are physically present for others but really absent, preoccupied with our smartphones. In the freeing-enslaving paradox, smartphones allow us the freedom to communicate with others, be entertained, work from remote locations, and access information in ways undreamed of a mere 20 years ago. This freedom, however, comes at a cost. Being always on and constantly available brings with it a sense of responsibility, or even obligation, to respond in a timely fashion to our technology (David & Roberts, 2017).

All the aforementioned features of the social behavior of ignoring live communication in favor of one's own smartphones are associated with the phubbing phenomenon. The search for the reasons for such behavior has spread in the works of the world academic community, where the issues of identifying factors that demonstrate a high correlation with the occurrence of such behavior are actualized. These studies have outlined a number of factors, e.g. virtual sense of community, emotional investment, fear of missing out, time spent on social media, somatization, ostracism, etc. that may be prerequisites for behavior such as phubbing.

The phubbing among education seekers, schoolchildren, or students, during the educational process should be noted. According to the results of the survey by N. G. Ugur and T. Kocha, it is determined that almost 80 % of respondents (Turkish university students) are distracted and miss the course due to phubbing. Also, 21 % of them admit that phubbing during courses affects their academic performance negatively. Based on students' answers in that study, it appears that they do not want to simply give up their cell phones in class and would continue to try to use them even if the institution's rules prohibit their possession or use (Ugur & Koc, 2015).

The study by O. Abramova et al. shows that on average, students resort to phubbing about 8 times during a lecture. Answering the question „If you have used the smartphone during the lecture, why have you done this?” respondents mainly reported texting as their main reason (43,5 %), followed by boredom (18,8 %) and concentration issues (14,9 %). Some respondents also used the smartphone as a substitute for a watch (hence used it to check time) (6,9 %), to read news (8,9 %) and also for course-related activities (5 %). Around 2 % of the respondents also reported the use of their smartphone during the lecture as a result of it being a habit (Abramova, et al., 2017). According to the study results, the main reasons for phubbing among students during classes are the following: low interest in the lecture, low satisfaction with the lecturer's presentation style, as well as problems with the self-control of the students themselves.

Cao S., et al., based on the results of the conducted questionnaire, arrive at the conclusions in the following areas:

- the impact of mobile phones on everyday life, namely 81.31 % of students believe that phones have a strong impact on their lives;
- the main purpose of smartphone use, namely 81.31 % of students use the phone as a means of communication and for entertainment;
- students' level of knowledge about phubbing, namely 96.7 % of students have heard about the concept of „phubbing” and believe that this phenomenon will become more and more popular (Cao, et al., 2018).

Based on the results of the interviews conducted among students of the Danish College of Business, J. Aagaard concludes that the students' attitude towards smartphone use during social interactions is characterized by „ambivalence”: on the one hand, they are indignant when other people „phub” them (distracted during live conversations on their smartphone), but on the other hand, they often continue to „phub” others. The author introduces the term „digital akrasia” (from the Greek. akrasia - intemperance, weakness of will), emphasizing that this is not a pathological condition that requires professional treatment (i.e. addiction), but a character flaw associated with harmful technological habits (Aagaard, 2020).

Based on the results of the study by Y. Al-Saggaf, which establishes for the first time that phubbing is a significant predictor of such an indicator as time spent on social networks (TSoSM), and that the effect of fear of missing out (FOMO) on time spent on social networks is completely transmitted through phubbing (Al-Saggaf, 2021). This statement means that fear of missing out reflects itself more intensively provided that smartphone users are currently communicating with someone live. In particular, FOMO refers to the anxious state of a person when he or she is afraid of missing something important or interesting. FOMO, in particular, is caused by dependence on social networks.

Mantere E., et al. conducted a role-playing experiment, the purpose of which was to determine the level of irritation in 2 scenarios. The first one is the smartphone user ignores the conversational initiative of the interlocutor; the second one is the person reading the magazine ignores the conversational initiative of the interlocutor. The study results demonstrate that participants in the respective samples were more annoyed by phubbing than by being ignored by reading a magazine. The annoyingness of phubbing was explained

by the negative attitude towards smartphones, which were considered to be used for useless activities, while magazines were more valued and considered more useful (Mantere, et al., 2021).

The study by A. Cebollero-Salinas et al., which was implemented through a questionnaire of 935 adolescents from Spanish schools, revealed the following results: the level of online emotional content increases the level of phubbing; online emotional expression is the most influential risk factor in both genders; netiquette protects girls to a greater degree (Cebollero-Salinas, et al., 2022).

The analysis results of the scientific papers related to the studies of the phubbing phenomenon confirm the rather significant attention to it in a wide range of issues, in particular, the studies of factors that lead to such behavior, the identification of certain dependencies as specific manifestations of social interaction, paradoxes of behavior, the impact on academic success, etc. It should be recognized that the phubbing phenomenon acquires permanent features and requires further research in the context of the formation of ethical behavior, acceptable social interaction, and ways of achieving them.

### Methodology

The study involves different approaches, namely using available statistics data, conducting online surveys among Ukrainian students as representatives of Zoomers as well as dealing with the AI chatbot ChatGPT, Midjourney Bot, SimilarWeb, and Google Digital Tools.

**The purpose** of the article is to determine the peculiarities of the phubbing phenomenon and its influence on social interactions via a survey of Generation Z representatives (Zoomers) and digital services to justify the need to strengthen social responsibility in the marketing activities of smartphone industry companies.

### Results

Smartphones have become an indispensable attribute of human life in the 21st century. With the advent of mobile phones, and later smartphones, the number of their users increases annually both in absolute and relative terms. According to „DataReportal” estimates, as of January 2019, the number of unique mobile phone users was 5.11 billion people (66.62 % of the total world population), and as of January 2023 – 5.44 billion people (67.91 % of the total) (Table 1).

**Table 1. Dynamics of changes in total population and unique mobile phone users for 2019-2023.**

	31 January 2019	30 January 2020	27 January 2021	26 January 2022	26 January 2023
<b>Total Population, billion</b>	7.67	7.75	7.83	7.91	8.01
Year-to-year change, billion	+0.084	+0.082	+0.081	+0.080	+0.067
Year-to-year change, %	+1.1	+1.1	+1.0	+1.0	+0.8
<b>Unique Mobile Phone Users, billion</b>	5.11	5.19	5.22	5.31	5.44
Year-to-year change, billion	+0.100	+0.124	+0.093	+0.095	+0.168
Year-to-year change, %	+2.0	+2.4	+1.8	+1.8	+3.2
<b>Unique Mobile Phone Users vs. Total Population, %</b>	66.62	66.97	66.67	67.13	67.91

*Source: summarized (Kemp, 2019, Kemp, 2020, Kemp, 2021, Kemp, 2022, Kemp, 2023).*

During the last five years (2019-2023), the indicators of the total population and unique mobile phone users demonstrate increasing trends. In particular, it is also important that not only the absolute indicator of unique mobile phone users is growing, but also the share of this indicator in the structure of the total population.

Developed countries have the highest percentage of the population owning a smartphone or mobile phone, followed by developing countries with slightly lower rates, and the lowest rates are found in Third World countries. On average, people spend 3 hours and 15 minutes a day on the phone (Howarth, 2023).

Reflection on the negative consequences of using smartphones during live communication led to the need to designate this phenomenon with a specific term. This project was implemented by a group of different experts at the University of Sydney on May 22, 2012, the result of which was to coin the term „phubbing”, which defines the phenomenon of a person’s distraction on their smartphone while live communication. The term is formed from the combination of the words „phone” (telephone) and «snubbing» (disrespectful attitude) and entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 2016.

Regarding the interpretation of phubbing, most researchers follow a similar understanding, namely: phubbing is a concept with many possible dynamics, such as showing a disrespectful attitude towards the person or persons with whom you communicate, neglecting them, and preferring the virtual environment to the real one (Karadağ, et al., 2015). It is the act of rejecting someone in a social environment by focusing on your phone instead of speaking directly to the person (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). It is defined as an individual halting face-to-face communication with another person to interact with their telephone (Erzen, et al., 2019).

A non-standard approach to the study of the phubbing phenomenon of is to turn to the tools of artificial intelligence (AI), in particular through the determination of how neural networks interpret „phubbing” through the appropriate visual or textual interpretation. For instance, Midjourney Neural Network, which allows the generation of digital images based on text queries, created the following selection of images (Fig. 1) upon the request of „phubbing”.

**Fig. 1. AI-generated photos on request „phubbing”.**



*Source: generated via Midjourney Bot.*

Based on the suggested set of images, Midjourney Bot can be seen to identify the query „phubbing” as a phenomenon when users are focused on their smartphones, regardless of whether users are with other users or alone with a smartphone.

On the other hand, let's once again turn to AI and analyze ChatGPT's answers regarding phubbing (table 2).

**Table 2. Answers of ChatGPT about „phubbing”.**

Request	ChatGPT's answer*
What is phubbing	Phubbing is a term that combines the words „phone” and „snubbing” and refers to the act of snubbing or ignoring someone in favor of using your mobile phone or other electronic devices. It is the practice of paying more attention to your phone than to the people around you, especially during social interactions. Phubbing can occur when you are in the presence of friends, family, or colleagues and choose to engage with your phone rather than actively participating in the conversation or giving your full attention to the people present.
Is phubbing related to marketing?	Yes, phubbing can be related to marketing in certain contexts. Phubbing behavior has implications for marketers and businesses that rely on customer engagement and interaction.
Will the initiatives to actualize the social problem of phubbing have a positive effect on the reputation of companies that sell smartphones?	The initiatives regarding the social problem of phubbing can have a positive effect on the reputation of companies that sell smartphones. By taking proactive steps to address phubbing, smartphone companies can demonstrate their commitment to promoting responsible and mindful smartphone usage. This can contribute to building a positive brand image and enhancing the reputation of the company.

\*answers are given in a concise way. Requests were formed on 19.06.2023

ChatGPT generates relevant answers about the concept of phubbing, its connection with marketing, and the importance of smartphone industry initiatives that bring attention to the social problem of phubbing.

Studying phubbing issues needs an outline of appropriate terminological apparatus.

The participants of phubbing are phubbers, directly those subjects of interaction who resort to phubbing, and phubees, those who are “victims” of phubbing (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

Further studies of phubbing led to the identification of its various types in view of various social interactions, which are the basis for the formation of prerequisites for the occurrence of this behavior (Fig. 2). It's safe to assume that, to varying degrees, phubbing occurs in almost all romantic relationships where one or both partners have a smartphone. This type of phubbing, known as partner phubbing (pPhubbing), is constantly checking or interacting with a smartphone in the presence of a significant other, and it is likely to erode that relationship (Reid, 2018). Situations, when the boss uses their mobile phone or is distracted by it in the presence of subordinates, are called boss phubbing (bPhubbing) (Roberts & David, 2017). Within the performance of work functions, work phubbing can also be distinguished, which occurs when colleagues ignore each other in favor of their own smartphones (for example, during conferences or work meetings). The phenomenon, when parents are distracted by their smartphones while communicating with their children, is also being investigated, which is called parental phubbing. Based on the above research analysis, it is possible to assert the existence of student phubbing, which occurs in situations where students are distracted by their smartphones during classes and other formal meetings related to the educational process (meetings, conferences, round tables, etc.).

It is also necessary to note some used phrases with the term phubbing. For example, the phubbing scale involves a series of questions or a questionnaire, the purpose of which is to measure phubbing in respondents. Some researchers use phubbing scales already developed by their predecessors, while others develop their own. Herewith, a phubbing session means the duration of one access to a smartphone, for its part, the phubbing frequency characterizes the number of such sessions during a certain period (for instance, in the context of student phubbing, the frequency is equal to the number of accesses to a smartphone during one lecture).

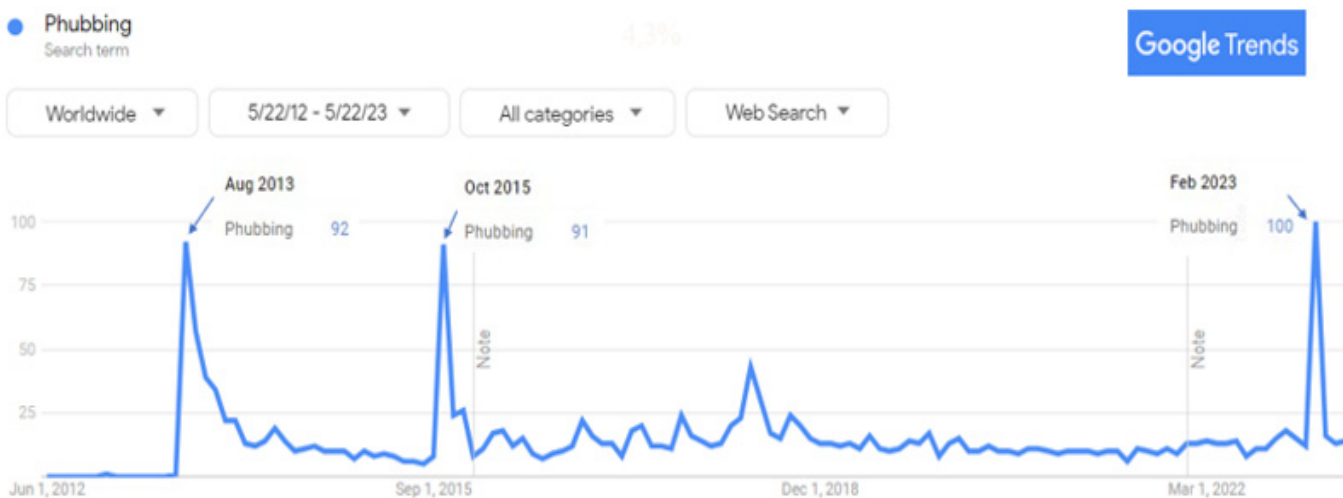
Fig. 2. Types of phubbing in view of various social interactions.

TYPES OF PHUBBING	
<p><b>Partner phubbing</b></p> <p>- situations when a person is distracted by their smartphone in the presence of their partner (for example, husband or wife)</p>	<p><b>Parent phubbing</b></p> <p>- situations where parents are distracted by their smartphones while communicating with their children</p>
<p><b>Work phubbing</b></p> <p>- situations when a person, performing his work duties, is distracted by his smartphone in the presence of their colleagues</p>	<p><b>Boss phubbing</b></p> <p>- situations when the boss uses his mobile phone or is distracted by it in the presence of subordinates</p>
<p><b>Student phubbing</b></p> <p>- situations where students are distracted by their smartphones during classes or other formal meetings related to the educational process</p>	

Source: summarized by the authors.

The extent to which phubbing issues have gained attention among network users can be traced through the analysis of the popularity of the studied term. It can be tracked the relative popularity of the search term „phubbing” around the world since May 2012, when the term appeared, using Google Trends (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Dynamics of the relative popularity of requests by users of the search term „phubbing” in the world since the creation of the term.

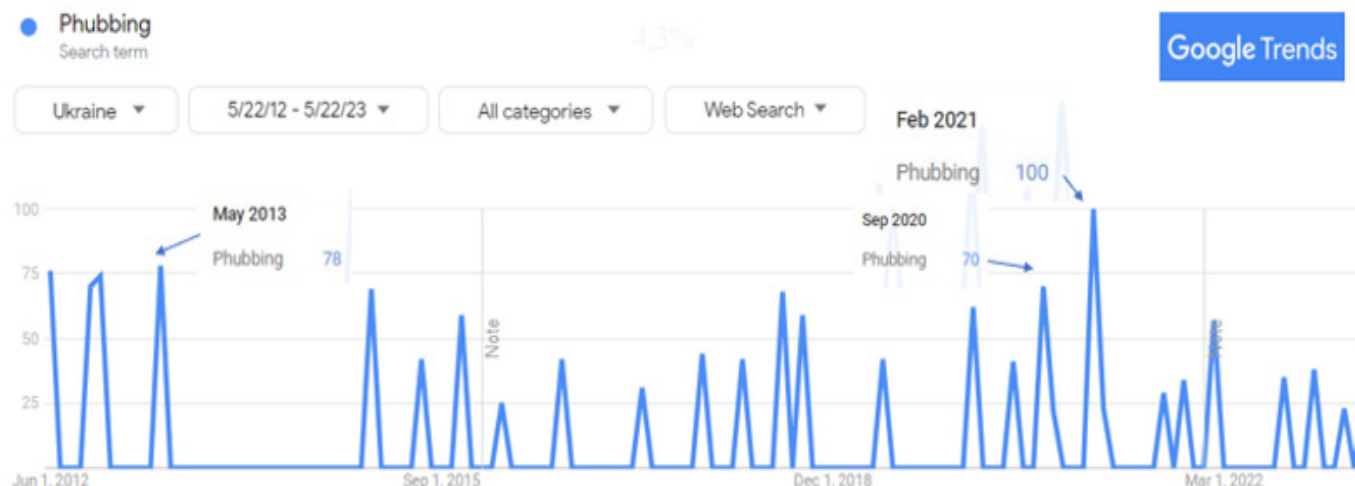


Source: built via Google Trends.

Fig. 3 shows the three peaks of the popularity of the search term „phubbing”, i.e. August 2013, October 2015, and February 2023.

In order to compare Ukrainian trends and global trends regarding the users’ attention to the phubbing phenomenon, the researched query for the same period in Ukraine for the search term „Phubbing” has been analyzed (Fig. 4).

**Fig. 4. Dynamics of the relative popularity of the search term „phubbing” in Ukraine since the creation of the term.**



Source: built via Google Trends.

The Ukrainian context of the relative popularity of the search term „phubbing” since the term was coined (on May 22, 2012) shows a peak that falls on February 2021. The second and third periods of increased attention were in May 2013 and February 2021. The periods of increasing attention to the phubbing phenomenon in the world and in Ukraine do not match.

To understand the level of reflection of Ukrainian youth regarding phubbing behavior, an anonymous survey of students of Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University was conducted, and the term „phubbing” was not used in the questions, but attention was paid to various situations associated with this phenomenon. The sample of respondents included students aged 18-22 years, from different faculties, courses, educational levels (bachelor’s and master’s), and different types of education (part-time and full-time). Gender differences were not taken into account during the study. A total of 164 students took part in the survey.

The questionnaire was developed using Google Form. Appendix 1 shows the survey results.

Respondents were offered 6 situations, simulating which they had to form their own attitude or evaluate the actions of other people, with whom, according to the assumption, live communication was taken place. All situations were directly or indirectly related to the phubbing phenomenon, ignoring the interlocutor in favor of one’s own smartphone. Respondents were offered ready-made answers and given the opportunity to provide answer options of their own.

The proposed answer options differed in their emotional component – from indifference, and neutrality to a negative attitude towards the behavior of the interlocutors in the context of the proposed situations.

Table 3 demonstrates the systematized answers of the respondents according to approval, indifference, or disapproval of the simulated situations.

**Table 3. Ranking of the provided answers according to the attitude of the respondents to the simulated situations.**

Situation	Distribution of answers according to the degree of approval/disapproval, %		
	Rather positive	Neutral (indifferent)	Rather negative
1	11.6	48.8	38.9
2	8	29.9	62.2
3	54.9	40.9	3.6
4	36.6	51.2	11.6
5	5.5	45.7	48.2

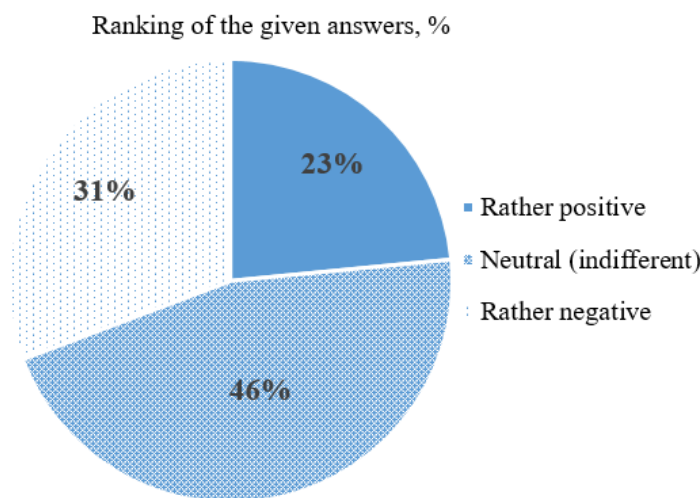


6	23.4	56.7	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>273.2</b>	<b>183.4</b>
	596.6*		

\*given that respondents could give their own answer it was sometimes difficult to clearly assign it to one of the three stated answer categories

Fig. 5 shows a pie chart of the division of respondents’ answers into shares according to the level of approval for simulated phubbing situations or phubbing prerequisites.

**Fig. 5. Respondents’ approval, neutrality, or disapproval of phubbing situations.**



The analysis of the distribution of the respondents’ answers allows us to argue that 23 % of the respondents have a rather positive attitude towards the manifestations of phubbing, 46 % are neutral and 31 % are rather negative. This shows that the majority of respondents do not associate phubbing behavior with something negative or wrong. The largest share of interviewees has a neutral attitude to simulated situations, during which they are given the role of those participants in relation to whom phubbing is manifested. Moreover, this neutrality is manifested in the fact that the respondents are neutral when they are in the status of both a phubber and phubee.

The general conclusion of the survey is that learners do not demonstrate a high level of awareness of appropriate behavior when live communication in the context of situations directly or indirectly related to phubbing.

It is obvious that the Internet and the availability of information have significantly affected social behavior, and the main recipient of such changes is the youth. Social interaction acquires distinctive features from previous periods of human development, and the main challenge, in our opinion, is the extraordinary speed of such changes. The need for simultaneous online and offline interaction also raises issues of ethical behavior, which can potentially affect the formation of socially acceptable established norms of interaction in a hybrid (one that involves both online and offline interaction) environment in the future, where the digital world becomes an integral attribute of social life. Thus, the English-language site [www.stopphubbing.com](http://www.stopphubbing.com), which was developed to promote the idea of creating meaningful life connections, relationships, and choices, among other goals and objectives, notes the need to learn the positive use of technology. Herewith, efforts to form a culture of communication cannot be a result that is formed only on the part of society. The complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty of the future framework model of socially acceptable behavior in a hybrid environment require the involvement of many parties, in particular, the market, public initiatives, the state, etc.

An example of drawing attention to the fact that smartphone users ignore their own interlocutors in favor of their smartphones was the launch in 2012 of the social marketing campaign “Stop phubbing” by the advertising agency McCann (Australia) and the creation of the website [www.stopphubbing.com](http://www.stopphubbing.com).

Developing a specialized English-language site to actualize the problem of phubbing is an important step, but the success of using this tool is achieved through the level of attention, i.e. the number of visitors to the site. To attract users’ attention to the site, it is necessary to increase interest in the idea being promoted via various communication channels (social networks, blogs, news resources, etc.), and receive feedback to improve the quality of the channel.

Through the SimilarWeb service, one can check the level of engagement with the site [www.stopphubbing.com](http://www.stopphubbing.com) (table 4).

**Table 4. Total month visits of website „www.stoppubbing.com”.**

Year	2023				
Month	January	February	March	April	May
Total visits, thousand	Less than 5	Less than 5	9,0	6,7	6,6

The dynamics of the five months of 2023 show a low level of attention to the site [www.stoppubbing.com](http://www.stoppubbing.com) and should draw the attention of the site developers to the weak points of the resource (non-renewable content, inconvenient navigation, etc.).

It is worth emphasizing that there is currently no significant public attention to the phubbing phenomenon. Apart from the aforementioned social campaign, other examples didn't manage to be found.

In that respect, the active position of smartphone industry companies regarding the formation of ethical behavior of smartphone users is appropriate. There are some reasons in favor of this statement. Firstly, smartphones, thanks to their portability, create a physical basis for phubbing, and secondly, companies may already have developed Codes of Social Responsibility that can provide methodological foundations for the development of specific programs and activities. So, in particular, according to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the economic, environmental, and social consequences of activities are among the indicators that are significant for the company (Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, 2013). The category of social consequences involves a fairly significant number of subcategories, including such as „Society” and „Product Responsibility”. In our opinion, aspects of the mentioned subcategories can be supplemented or expanded by provisions on the formation of skills in the positive use of technologies, which lead to the reduction of threats to the life and health of users and contribute to the education of the ethical use of products.

Another perspective direction of development, within the framework of which we believe it is possible to develop measures to draw attention to the indicated issues, is the EU Program „Digital Europe” (2021-2027) for the development of the digital economy. It is aimed at the development of advanced digital skills, the introduction of digital technologies at enterprises, the development of digital infrastructure, and the even greater availability of digital services for citizens and public institutions of the countries of the European Union and countries associated with the Program. Its framework provisions fully enable the development and implementation of measures that involve the formation of the skills of appropriate user behavior in a hybrid environment.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Digital transformations are changing people's lives: on the one hand, these are new opportunities for improving various spheres of human activity, and on the other, these are new challenges, including those related to various types of user dependence on the digital environment (Internet, smartphones, social networks, etc.). It is common knowledge that such dependencies cause risks to the physical condition of users. However, their influence on social interactions is no less important. Accordingly, research into the causes of inappropriate behavior associated with habits of constantly being in the digital world as opposed to real life becomes relevant. One such negative challenge is the phubbing phenomenon, a term, which was coined in 2012 and formed from the words „phone” and „snubbing”. Phubbing refers to situations where a participant or participants are distracted by their smartphones during live communication.

The emergence of the phenomenon and the word for its designation led to the appearance of appropriate terms to denote the subjects or participants of such interactions (phubber, and phubee), the verb that implies the action of phubbing (to phub), the classification of types of phubbing based on the features of social interaction (partner, boss, work, parental, and student phubbing). Also, for the needs of phubbing research, special terms are used, such as the phubbing scale, phubbing session, phubbing frequency, etc.

The analysis of the sources made it possible to outline the reasons with which researchers associate the phubbing phenomenon, namely a sense of virtual community; emotional investment; fear of missing out; time spent on social media; somatization; ostracism, etc.

However, according to the study results via Google Trends, the appropriate level of attention to problems

affected by the phubbing phenomenon both at the global level and at the level of Ukraine, in particular, has not been received. This raises the necessity to update the issue of phubbing in terms of its negative impact on quality live communications.

Based on the survey results of students of Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, which involved identifying respondents' attitudes to situations related to phubbing, it was found that the majority of respondents do not associate phubbing with anything negative or wrong. The largest share of interviewees has a neutral attitude to simulated situations, during which they are given the role of those participants in relation to whom phubbing is manifested. Moreover, this neutrality is manifested in the fact that the respondents are neutral when they are in the status of both phubber and phubee. The general conclusion of the survey is that students do not demonstrate an adequate level of awareness of appropriate behavior when live communication in the context of situations directly or indirectly related to phubbing.

The involvement of additional tools to promote the social problem of phubbing among the population (for example, the site [www.stopphubbing.com](http://www.stopphubbing.com)) does not demonstrate the proper reach of the audience through the digital space, which was confirmed by checking the site's traffic via the SimilarWeb service.

An urgent need under the current conditions of the development and spread of digital technologies is to define the boundaries of ethical behavior as a set of rules and norms when using smartphones, which are indispensable companions of 68% of the world's population. The primary role in these processes should be played by smartphone industry companies, which, adhering to the principles of socially responsible business, should care not only about the quality of goods, the ecological component of production, and their use but also about the consequences of the constant smartphone use in the aspect of social interaction of users. Development and implementation of such kind of company policy can be done through marketing tools, e.g. websites.

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**Appendix A. Survey results of students of Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University in the context of studying the attitude of education seekers to situations related to phubbing (N=164).**

№	Situation	Share of answers	Answer
1	While having lunch with your acquaintances/friends/colleagues, they occasionally take out and check their smartphones. What is your attitude towards such behavior?	48,2%	Neutral. I do it myself now and then.
		28%	It's a little distracting but not critical.
		11,6%	With understanding. All people are busy.
		7,9%	It is noticeably annoying because the interlocutor is constantly distracted.
		2,4%	Negative. I ask the interlocutor to forget about the phone during lunch.
		0,6*%	It doesn't matter.
		0,6*%	If it bothers me, I ask please the interlocutor to hide their phone. And it happens that this is the norm.
		0,6*%	I have lunch alone.
2	When your interlocutor's smartphone rings, they pick it up and answer it, even if you were in an active conversation. What's your opinion on the matter?	62,2%	It would be appropriate if the interlocutor said sorry for their necessity to answer.
		29,9%	I don't worry about such small things during informal communication.
		4,3%	This call is probably more important than our conversation.
		3,7%	I don't care about it – he can do what and when he wants.
3	While having lunch with your acquaintances/friends/colleagues, they put their mobile phones away. Do you notice such moments?	54,3%	I notice, but I don't focus on it.
		40,9%	No, that's what I do myself.
		2,4%	This is annoying because the interlocutor's gaze constantly returns to the phone.
		1,2%	I ask the interlocutor to hide their mobile phone while we are having lunch.
		0,6*%	I notice.
		0,6*%	My friends usually put their phones back in their pocket.
4	During lunch with your acquaintances/ friends/colleagues, some of your interlocutors do not put their mobile phones on the table, while others do. Do you notice such nuances?	36,6%	No. I myself always put my phone on the table during lunch.
		28,7%	No. But I don't have such a habit myself – the phone should not be on the table during lunch.
		21,3%	I notice, but it's the job of psychologists to analyze people's behavior.
		9,8%	I immediately notice it – it is immediately visible who is at the table and who is on the „phone”.
		0,6*%	I don't pay attention to such things :)
		0,6*%	I notice.
		0,6*%	I notice but I don't care.
		0,6*%	I notice. It is also important for me, but the phone should not be on the table (if it is a meal; if not, then it does not matter).
		0,6*%	I usually don't notice such little things, but I don't put my phone on the table myself, because it's not hygienic. However, I do not criticize other people for this.
		0,6*%	I have lunch alone.